

**DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 26, 2004**

Members Present: Hastings, Thompson, Carroll, Ennis, Harden, Kitson, Lardizzone, Magner, Newstadt, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Morris, Phillips and Timberman

Staff Present: Davila

Guests: Harriet Smith Windsor and Al Carter (SOS), Jim Doran and Les Bruce (AMVETS), Burton Barr (NARFE), Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL), Mike Wolanski and Norris Townsend (DE DOL), Tom Daws and Ralph Hoag (VVA), Bill Holloway (Bernardon Haber Holloway architects), Bob Furman (DAS/DFM), Reginald Glasby (Veterans Upward Bound Program)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nation's Flag.

Hastings – Harriet Smith Windsor is with us and would like to say a few words.

Smith Windsor – Thank you very much. I just wanted to be around for the changing of the guard so to speak and show my support. I have enjoyed working with Jim Thompson very much and all of you. I am certainly going to enjoy working with George Hastings, he and I go back a long way. We've come a long way in the last few years and I think we have a long way to go and we are going to do it joyfully and get a lot accomplished. Thank you for having me here today and let me know what I can do to help.

Barr – I just wanted to report that I had conversations last week with the candidates for Legislature and they are incumbents for the 38th, 14th, and 41st districts and I brought up the Veterans Home issue. They all knew about the Veterans Home, but they did not know about the issues and problems, except one, and he was not quite on top of it, but he was aware that there were certain things going on. I wanted to express our organization's help in getting the word out through these people.

Hastings – I wanted to mention that the Veterans Home steering group meets here every Wednesday at 2:00 PM. The Committee is chaired by the director of Administrative Services and representatives from several government agencies, along with the Veterans Commission. Mr. Thompson had been sitting in and now I am sitting in with Tony Davila, as well as the architects and so forth, reviewing all the work that goes into what is going to be a pretty large project. I think that meeting is open to pretty much anyone who wants to attend. With a project of this size, there are usually issues, but they are usually easily solved.

Wolanski – I would like to mention that we were at a ceremony this morning that was hosted by the Department of Labor and the Governor signed a proclamation honoring veterans, designating November as "Hire a Vet Month". Of course where we come from, that is every month. We would like to thank Commissioner Lardizzone, Tony Davila and the DAV Department Commander for coming.

Hastings – I think you all received the minutes in the mail; any amendments or changes?

Harden – Yes, I have on the 1st page, very last sentence, it should be quiet, not quite. On page 2, when Tony Davila was speaking he said "When the sites were looked at by Duffield, all ten sites were just looked at" it should be were and not where. On page 4, when Mr. Baker was talking he says "the town managers and town planners of Milford new years ahead", new should be knew. On page 9, Webb was talking and said "each organization should send a least five flags", a should be at.

Magner – On page 3, where it says Carroll about the 8th line down, it should say myself, I made that statement.

Kitson – On page 3, about 6 lines down, it should say Kitson, not Baker.

Hastings – When you make a comment, please state your name clearly so Pam can get it when she is reviewing the tape.

**MOTION BY NEWSTADT TO ACCEPT SEPTEMBER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS AMENDED,
SECONDED BY MAGNER, MOTION CARRIED.**

Hastings – For the luncheon scheduled for November 11th, we have only sold about 30 tickets. I need for you all to push the tickets; that place holds about 100 or so.

Carroll – Will there be a point where we will not have a luncheon if we do not meet a certain guarantee?

Davila – This year we'll find that out. If we do not get the numbers we need, then we will stop offering the luncheon.

Carroll – So this year we are going forward?

Davila – That is correct, we have already signed the contract.

Hastings – We had a full room last year, this is unusual to have sold so few tickets. One of the things we haven't done for the past couple of years is have a speaker of sort, we have just had a luncheon. We might think about whether we want to change that and have someone make short remarks.

Davila – Whoever is the representative for the day (the organization), can handle the guest speakers, as you have been doing for the past 14 years.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Newstadt – Last night, we had a meeting with the family group at the Northern Cemetery. It went quite well, we had four members of the Family Advisory Committee, our Executive Director, and the administrators for both the Northern and Southern Cemeteries. What was discussed was a very positive request by the members of the Family Advisory Committee to assist administratively in compiling good records relating to the folks who are interred there, so when we go to make markers and so forth, we have a clean list. They also feel that we have turned a corner and that we will not have an adversary relationship that may or may not have existed to whatever degree in the past. So I am looking forward to the continued positive environment we have now. As far as the Cemetery goes, the upgrades, expansions and so forth are going quite well, however, if you do visit the Cemetery and you are allergic to manure smell, be careful it is kind of overwhelming when you get through the gate. Speaking of the gate, there is a minor security problem because there is no gate as such, and we have evidently had a few people coming in and putting unauthorized decorations on sites and so forth. I am not so sure what the answer is there, other than having a full-time security guard and I am not so sure that is feasible. We are meeting every 90 days and the next meeting with that group will be in January 2005. I also met in the past month with the Southern group and there are no significant issues at this time.

Carroll – We discussed the markers being replaced at the Cemetery, I gather the decision has been made to use a plastic type marker. Earlier on we had discussed using a bronze, which really is a permanent type of marker. I have concerns about this plastic, while it will be ground level in most cases, there will be fertilizers, different insecticides and such, sprayed around. Where are these used elsewhere in other cemeteries? Do we know that they are going to hold up or are they going to decay and look awful as the ones that were left? I feel strongly that the bronze marker is used at the grave sites; it is used throughout cemeteries everywhere. We did talk about cost, but at the time, it was mentioned that there were fees available to take care of this.

Newstadt – This was not an arbitrary decision by me or our Executive Director, this was a joint decision; they were given a variety of markers and they chose this one. My impression, and I certainly do not know where else it is used because I am not into the cemetery surveillance business, but looking at it, it is a very attractive and very sturdy looking marker and I think it is going to be quite appropriate. In the long term standpoint, given the quality of it, I think it will do very well. I understand what you are saying; the bronze is the traditional memorial material.

Carroll – I am going to relate back to what you are saying. You have no known track record for this plastic and they are going to be embedded into the ground. I want to be put on record as saying that I feel a more permanent marker, like the bronze we had talked about, should be put into place.

Davila – Actually the marker will not be embedded into the ground; what will be embedded is a concrete marker base. The actual plastic sits into the base about a ¼ inch down and the plastic itself is about a ¼ inch thick. The reason for the concrete also, is so that we don't have the problem as we are having up there now. The Family Advisory Committee chose this marker and they were given an option of six markers, including a bronze.

Carroll – I appreciate your comments, plastic is plastic and chemicals are chemicals, regardless of whether it is in a block of concrete a ¼ inch below or not, I feel in time it is going to deteriorate.

Hastings – Does this apply only to the Northern Cemetery?

Davila – That is correct.

Magner – If this is going to be recessed, what about the snow and everything melting on that and freezing?

Davila – There are slits built into them for run off of water and snow.

Hastings – What is the difference in cost?

Newstadt – I do not have a specific figure.

Davila – The plastic is about \$24 and the bronze running anywhere close to \$80 a piece. The total would be a \$7 marker base plus \$24 for the plastic insert. There is a considerable cost difference when we are talking about 500 tree markers and 118 bench markers.

Magner – But the accessibility to damage and the replacement compared to the bronze which is more durable.

Lardizzone – But that is what the families wanted; they picked it.

Harden – Having a family member buried in that Cemetery, I saw the one that was chosen by the ADHOC Committee and it was very nicely done. However, as someone who has someone buried there, I would have preferred the bronze. But we had six different blocks there and it was the one chosen, but it was chosen only by those members of the ADHOC Committee, plus myself and Bob Wasson, who happened to be on the Committee at that time. You are talking to just these people, you are not talking to everyone who has someone buried in the Cemetery.

Hastings – I think Carroll has a point; bronze ages with dignity, plastic doesn't. I think that is an issue that is liable to pop up again; we might want to look at it further.

Davila – We have already ordered the marker bases and are in the process of ordering the markers, so if you are going to discuss it, you need to discuss it today. Then we are going to have to either stop the process immediately and deal with the family committee that made the decision and go from there. We are not heading down a very good path at this time.

Webb – I think that you should let things lie, because you gave that ADHOC Committee the choice; they made the choice, now let it go.

Thompson – One thing that Tony Davila did not mention; if you go to the bronze plate, many of these plaques would have to be re-written. Then you would have to get a hold of the families, because with the bronze you could only put so many words on it.

Davila – 80 letters.

Thompson – Some of them go quite a lot further than that with their feelings and sorrow for their loved ones. If we use this one, then we can put everything on it.

Hastings – We will let it lie for now, but I would be surprised if the issue didn't come up again.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

Davila – There are a couple of activities happening on Veterans Day. We are going to pay tribute to the Timko family, this is a family that sent eight children to WWII and there are two or three survivors of the family. I have asked the Lt. Governor, since we are doing the WWII History Project, to do something in the way of a proclamation or tribute to the family. This year we will not be having a speaker, we will be having a choir group, the Brandywine Choir Group, which will be doing a presentation; plus the floral tribute and comments from our guests.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

Kitson - Nothing now, since the legislature is out of session. We will start working on the budget probably in January.

Hastings – Budget hearing on the 19th of November at the Tatnall Building, at 9:00am. This is the Secretary of the State's budget hearing, would you like us to come in force?

Smith Windsor – Absolutely, you always have.

Hastings – Ok, everyone in your blazers that can make it.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Carroll – It is my understanding that the new VA Director at the Wilmington Hospital has been selected and will come on board about the 28th of November. I do not have his name to be able to pass that on. I was able to attend the review of the Voices of the WWII History Project to preserve Delaware's war efforts on Wednesday, October 20, 2004. This has been spearheaded by Lt. Governor Carney and there were a number of our Commissioners there and we think it was well done. It is not nearly completed, but it looks like something that we will all be very proud of. The semi-annual Congressional briefing at the VA was presented by the VA acting director. There is a handout that MOPH National Service Officer Rich Magner put together and it is a synopsis of that review. The total for the VA Home fund as of October 25, 2004, is \$96,708.49. At the VA again, we had the VAVS annual training program, which was from 9-12 on Thursday, October 21, 2004. The training was regarding patient privacy, flu and colds, computer security, customer service, fire and safety. There is a handout that was given out "Is it the Cold or the Flu?". The latest information from the VA that I have, is a person going there would go to their primary physician and would be able to receive a flu shot at that time. Other times that the flu shots will be given will be announced.

Lardizzone – Starting on November 2nd, they will be giving flu shots every Tuesday for the volunteers at the hospital.

Hastings – Have they established a priority list?

Carroll – Yes, all the patients in the nursing home have received one and individuals at high risk have received one.

Magner – Starting today, October 26th, they are giving the flu shots to the staff, the people who are in close contact with the patients, some of the volunteers. They asked that not everyone show up today as it is ongoing, every Tuesday throughout the month of November until they run out of the serum. Priority are those who have chronic health problems and those 65 years of age or older.

Hastings – You mentioned the \$96,000 donation fund. Tony Davila, were you able to check out the question that came up at the Steering Group?

Davila – If we use the Veterans Home Fund as a source to funnel funds through, HB 500 indicates for the construction and maintenance of the Home, we can definitely use that as part of the construction. However, there are approved and not approved costs, all of those have to go through VA first. I can get more information, but at this time, we can utilize additional funds as long as legislation indicates it is for the construction of a Veterans Home. The only thing different is if we are going to include that and there are going to be costs involved where we are to use additional monies, then we may have to submit a new 424, and back it up by HB 500.

Hastings – We have had questions in the Steering Group about the square footage; would the VA entertain increasing the square footage with this additional money?

Davila – That's an option that would have to be discussed with them. They may want to do something like enhancements or build an extra building on the side, but it all has to be approved by the VA. However, all we have to do is pass it by Frank Salvias and if Frank says it is ok, then it is not a problem.

Magner – This money that is being collected, is it sitting in a non-interest bearing account?

Davila – No, interest bearing.

Hastings – What the State is asking, is if the service organizations are going to make donations, make them now. The more money that we can accumulate and get matching funds from the Veterans Administration, the better a home we can build.

Also with the check-off on the State tax return, you can encourage all of your friends to take advantage of that to generate as much money as we can in this Veterans Home account. The architects are faced with two choices; either scrunch everything up to make it fit in the amount of square footage that the dollars will pay for or get more dollars to make a slightly bigger home.

Davila – I looked at the square footage that was given and have some questions. We will ask the architects tomorrow about the size of the rooms, figures and calculations. We looked at staffing and where they would go and also looked at equipment and I have all that in a database now. We have a list of some concerns that I will present tomorrow to the architects and to the Committee.

Hastings – We have generated an equipment list, but the list is not complete and we have had some discussion about things like televisions in the rooms. One of the things that the service organizations can do is donate monies to purchase televisions and of course we want all of the televisions to be standardized. So there are a lot of needs like that, which are not built into the game plan.

Davila – You might want to mention the list that was given out last week concerning donations, what I would like to call a “wish list” of items. All of the Commissioners should have received the minutes and the list.

Hastings – There is a rather lengthy list of items that they would like to have the service organizations donate money for.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

No report.

PERSONNEL

Davila – We have one position down south and we are waiting for HR to advertise the position.

GROUNDBREAKING & DEDICATION

Davila – I met with Mo Morris last week and we discussed some issues surrounding the size of the group, whether we should have a tent on the grounds, and of course we have to consider the weather. I will bring it up tomorrow with the Committee. We are putting together a list of dignitaries and possibly trying to secure some gold plated entrenching tools. We are working through a company in New Jersey. We will have this information available for you as this progresses.

Hastings – I assume we will have someone from the Veterans Administration attending?

Davila – We can probably have the new director from the Wilmington Medical Center, since they are the medical center of jurisdiction. However, if you are considering the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, my recommendation is you invite him for the ribbon cutting ceremony (opening).

Newstadt – Do we have a firm date for groundbreaking?

Davila – Not that I know of, I understand that it will be May and the architects will get back with us.

Magner – Will that site be accessible, being that far back from the road, at that time of year?

Furman – That is a good question. Hopefully, we can work with the town of Milford on that.

Davila – That is one of the things we discussed, with it being May, with the rain, mud, and possible construction equipment out there. Tomorrow we will bring up these issues.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

Kitson – I have received a couple of e-mails and I am going to contact the people. One of them was from Mo Morris, one of his people wants to help out, and I got an e-mail from General Hastings and I will get hold of Mr. Duken. I am working on it diligently.

Carroll – I have been able to compile some of the locations and I have the sites that are on the University of Delaware, there are four sites with monuments. Also, I have been in contact with the Historical Society of Delaware in Wilmington, talked to the librarian there, and there are some pamphlets on the various monuments in the City of Wilmington. Also, I sent you an e-mail regarding a website that has been put together by the County of Camden, New Jersey, which is very extensive and hopefully this will be of some assistance.

Hastings – I think what we are finding is that there are a lot more monuments and memorials around the State than we realized. There are a lot of monuments that had been established by local organizations that are not known outside of that local community. I think putting that together in a catalog and publicizing that information would be a great service for us to provide.

Kitson – That is one of the reasons I want to go around and take pictures of everything, so we can put them on the web-site.

Hastings- We have a representative from the architectural firm here today.

Holloway – It is good to see everyone again, if you remember, we met probably a month to six weeks ago and talked about your desires and the blue sky visions about the Home. We are now at the point, as you can see from the sketches on the board, we are trying to put some of those ideas onto paper and my comments will just be very cursory and then I would certainly welcome any question or concerns from anyone in the room. We have made good progress, we have been grateful to have the opportunity to look at options on the Business Park North for just the optimal solution or the optimal place to put this new facility. We are 90 to 95% sure that it will be site A, which is the site that is north, the northern most site. The site that butts the tree line in the back of the site, we are happy for that, because it will make a far more pleasant place for our ill aided heroes to reside. So we feel that is the right decision. We are now starting to budget; we have done the first budget with a rough estimate of 96,000 sqft. The original application that came to the Department of Veterans Affairs talked about 87,000 to 88,000 sqft, but we have been striving to give the constituency of veterans the best facility for the dollar, so we are stretching it somewhat. We are also trying to include all the things that are on the wish list into the building and that is one of the challenges that we have been exploring. The 1st budget did come in slightly over what we had hoped, so at our Steering Committee meeting we discussed places where we could possibly all agree to pull some square footage out of the building. The nursing administration that is onboard the Steering Committee had suggested two multipurpose rooms and training rooms and we are taking out one training room, those kinds of things. We are optimistic that between some of those budget revisions that we just talked about, being able to use some of the funds and get the two thirds matching from the feds, that we are going to be able to balance that situation within the next week or so. Today, we have our chief designer and representatives from Heery International, who are our estimators and contacts with the people in Washington, visiting with Frank Salvas and Dennis Hancher their chief architect. So they are reviewing a schematic plan and hopefully in short order, we will be able to show everyone, or at least the Steering Committee first, and then the Commission, some sort of overall plan that will meet the budget and will reflect the common carry of the people in Washington. So that is our challenge now, we have about three different parallel paths; one is making sure we are designing something that meets with approval of the Department of Veterans Affairs, designing something that gets as much of the wish list incorporated into it, and designing something that meets the budget. So all three of those are moving targets right now and our job is to track them all simultaneously until we come to a happy median between all of them. We have taken up some time in the programming and budgeting process and we are struggling to make up that time in terms of the design portion and get the RFP out. However, no one believes we are going to endanger the end date of occupancy. So it has been our position, that if we have to adjust the schedule between now and the end of 2006, it is ok, as long as we get that place up and running on January 2007. So, at this point I would like to throw it open to questions. I would just bring your attention to this sketch on the board and the sketch behind it, which envisions some rooms that are options. We have already peeled some rooms out of this and they are being redesigned. There is a different sketch being shown to the guys in Washington today, so it is a work in progress, it is not final.

Magner – The angled cuts, are they actually the wings that are being extended out?

Holloway – Yes, in this scheme that is what would occur.

Hastings – The total footprint is what about 6 acres on a 22 acre site, something of that sort?

Holloway – Yes, right now the program is showing 96,000 sqft, with some math adjustment it is about 93,000 sqft. That throws in what we call a grossing factor for hallways and mechanical rooms and stuff like that. So if that factor is not high enough, you still have to design all the hallways to get to all the places, that are the program areas, which are the rooms themselves. So the challenge for us as architects, is to get the minimum amount of circulation space, which is not useful besides circulation.

Magner – They are going with the ten foot hallways?

Holloway – That is the Veterans Affairs standard in designing in the past. Unless we get an exception, we will have a little more guidance on that today when our guys return.

Carroll – Is the semi-circle the entranceway?

Holloway – Yes, that would be a roadway.

Carroll – Would that be sitting perpendicular to the loop road in the business park?

Holloway – Right now we do not know how the building will fit right on the property until the wings are added. So what we would do is, architecturally, we believe it should be visible from the road, so you do not have to drive around the back to get into the entrance. It will be probably within 180 degrees off the access road from the business park, so you can readily see it. There is something to be said for being able to drive by and see where you are supposed to be. So that would be our goal.

Carroll – In concern with the wetland in back of this facility, how is this set up with the Department of Army Engineers or whoever it might be?

Holloway – The Corps of Engineers has jurisdiction on the wetlands, federally designated wetlands, we have had the wetlands surveyed and marked. We have concluded that they are not within any area we would want to build on. That satisfies the federal requirements that we need to stipulate for the approval of our funding, so the wetlands have been investigated and they are not a problem right now.

Carroll – I have here a copy of an article that was published on October 8, 2004, in the Milford Beacon regarding an artifact that was found. How does this stack into the equation of all this right now?

Holloway – The day before yesterday, Dan Griffith went out to the site; he is our director of Historical and Cultural Affairs in Harriet Smith Windsor's department. The area where we want to build the facility is not in a primary area that would be likely for any historical artifacts. So even though there has been settlements around that stream further in the back, the good thing is the City of Milford has agreed to give us a few more acres than we had originally talked about, and those things lie mostly in that area we are not going to touch, but will be accessible to the Veterans Home recreation and trails.

Carroll – There will be no difficulty in developing for that?

Holloway – We are 95% sure, I am not going to say 100% until all the reports are written. However, there is competence exhibited that even if something was found in the area where we want to move earth, that we would be able to deal with it archaeologically before constructing the Home.

Daws – At the last Commission meeting, the Commissioners requested Mr. Davila and Mr. Thompson to go to the Steering Committee and have the site moved back to option B, when did the Commission vote on option A? Also, if the Army Corps of Engineers does come in with an unfavorable report on the wetlands, is there a contingency program for that?

Holloway – The wetlands question I think is resolved, the report is done, and it is favorable. The direction given to us, as designers, is that the Steering Committee preferred site A, and that if site A was not suitable because of any of the historical, wetlands, or cultural kinds of limitations, then we would immediately opt back to site B. I think it is important to know, with the footprint and the desire to allow some foresight for expansion, even site B would be modified in acreage and shape from the original site that was originally offered by the City of Milford, and they have been quite cooperative in that process. It would be more acreage and the site would get wider rather than long, so that where we stand now, it looks likely that site A will be the one we pursue, however the fall back is site B, the modified one. I don't know if that answers your question?

Daws – Not quite.

Holloway – How could I answer it more clearly?

Daws – The Commission could, as far as when they voted on option A.

Hastings – Look at the whole 60 acres as a site, so it is a matter of where you put the footprint within that 60 acres. At the 1st Steering Group meeting after our last Commission meeting, several members of the Commission were there, and after looking at the advantages and disadvantages of site A versus site B, we came to the conclusion that the proposed area was the better choice. Not every member of the Commission was there, but I think that was the consensus.

Furman – The site that was originally proposed by Milford, site A, was proposed just by them. Quite frankly, I can't tell you how they arrived at the size and shape of the site, but they did. When Bill became involved in terms of programming the site, he came to us and said you know the shape was not an optimum shape for the Home and the expansion on the site that was proposed by Milford. We went back to Milford and said could we modify the size of the area or shape of it to better suit the Veterans Home. That's when we said we had our choice of which site to use or which location on the site to use. We as a group, took a look at the entire 60 acre site, to see if we had our choice of where to put the Home, where would be the best place. That is what evolved into site A and modified site B. Again, I think the site that the Steering Committee chose probably offers certain advantages that the other site does not and probably will be best in the long run.

Hastings – So it went from a 14+ partial acres, to something that is up to about 23 acres, and actually a better section of that whole 60 acre site.

Barr – I started a committee of Elks and one of the problems we had in trying to settle on what our role is, we asked if this is a Home or a Hospital? Or what percent of what is it? Should we plan on helping with a Home or a Hospital?

Hastings – It is a long term care facility. There is a sizable nursing staff and so forth, but it is not a hospital. It is a long term care facility for veterans that need constant care and those who are aged. It is not competing in mission with the hospital or the various clinics.

Carroll – We have discussed this earlier on, regarding the development of the buildings and the area in this business park. Have there been any further plans between the City of Milford and the State regarding some restrictions or limitations as to what could be in the surrounding area of the Veterans Home.

Hastings – Has Gloria Homer met with the Milford people yet?

Furman – I don't believe she has met with them yet. I believe Secretary Homer is going to send a letter to Milford asking for certain rights in connection to the Veterans Home. The City of Milford has provided assurance to us, the State, that the buildings and types of facilities that will be located in this area will be the type that will fit in with the Home. It will not be industrial facilities; it will be more along the lines of medical offices and things like that.

Hastings – Right now Mr. Carroll, it is an understanding that Administrative Services is going to formalize that in writing. At this point everyone agrees that there will be no other facilities that will create a lot of noise or be incompatible with the Veterans Home.

Magner – In the 60 acre parcel, is site A the highest level in terms of ground level?

Holloway – I would have to answer I think so, there is not that much variation, but I think that it is.

Furman – One of the sites we looked at was lower than both A and B, and we talked about the amount of fill that would be necessary to bring it up. Site A was optimal among the higher of the other sites and there was not much difference.

Holloway – (Referring to charts) This is the topographic plan that identifies where we are, and I would have to say based on my limited eye sight, that it is about 40 ft. above sea level at the highest point.

Harden – It is my understanding from the minutes that I have received from the Steering Committee meetings, that it is the Steering Committee that preferred option A; whereas the Commission at our last meeting took a vote that we wanted B. So therefore I am reading that the Steering Committee is choosing the site, not where we want it, but where the Steering Committee wants it, which is option A. Am I not right according to these minutes? It says that DCVA stated that the Commission members who attended the last meeting had preferred option B at the beginning of the meeting. Upon the review of option A, it was preferred by the Steering Committee, the Commission concurred that A was the better of the two. What Commission decided it was the better of the two?

Hastings – The people who attended the Steering Committee I think, concluded that site A was the better of the two and so that is where we let it stand.

Daws - Did you send it back to the Commission for a formal vote?

Magner – After it was presented to us in the audience and getting into the particulars of each site, that A being the larger parcel, and B having its problems with the artifacts and the foundation of the old farm house, I know I kind of went with site A, because it was the larger of the property.

Harden – I just wondered, because it says that option A was preferred by the Steering Committee.

Hastings – At the last Commission meeting, it was Mr. Carroll that first objected to the change because we were blindsided by it and frankly we were not thinking of the whole 60 acres. Mr. Carroll, after looking at it in more detail, do you want to comment on what your conclusion was?

Carroll – Well, I felt at that time, based on information that we heard here again this morning, and this was reviewed in detail, it appeared that the site up in the north would be the better location. There were restrictions on acreage and locating and putting that home on 14.8 acres. There was discussion about having a private entrance, which was not foreseeable off RT 15 and Airport Road. Those were some of the factors discussed.

Newstadt – This discussion brings up questions in my mind, just exactly what are our prerogatives, if not responsibilities, relative to decisions made by the Steering Committee. Have we seeded our authority to make decisions to the Steering Committee, are we an approval or review group, what is the relationship?

Hastings – We have a voice on the Steering Committee. The Committee is chaired by the director of Admin Services, and as I said, there is representation from the Budget Office, The Commission, plus the architects and so forth, and several government agencies participating, so it is a joint effort. But the driving force, I would say, on the Steering group is first keeping it within the amount of dollars we have to deal with and all the construction of course falls under Admin Services, so that is why Gloria Homer, the director of Admin Services, is chairing the Steering Group. Do we dictate what gets done? No, we have a voice.

Newstadt – The perception that we are an approval agency relative to decisions of the Steering Committee is not correct?

Hastings – I would say you are probably right, but if we objected strongly to something, that would certainly be taken into consideration.

Newstadt – I would like to make sure that it is in the minutes, that the understanding of this Commission at this time, is that we are not an approving authority, as such, for Steering Committee decisions.

Hastings – I don't think we have been since day one.

Newstadt – But obviously the perception by some of us, and it was articulated here this morning, the perception was that decisions were made arbitrarily if you will, without approval or vote by this body. That is why I asked the question, "What is the relationship between this body and the Steering Committee?" So that not only do we understand, but our friends in the audience understand, the constraint that is on us relative to making decisions via the Steering Committee's decisions.

Hastings - I think the mechanics of how this is taking place is right and proper. What this Commission has done by first getting approval for a Veterans Home and coordinating with the Veterans Administration, and so forth. Once you get through all that process there is a hand off to those agencies that handle the actual construction and so forth and a number of different agencies are involved.

Newstadt – I have no problem with the way it is preceding, this was not an objection to the way the mechanics have worked out, it was strictly for clarification, not just for myself, but for the folks from the various organizations that might need to understand our role. Over the time I have been on the Commission, there have been various incidences where our role has been misperceived by members of organizations. I have no problem with professionals doing a professional job, which I think is being done very well by the Steering Committee and the people who are represented on it.

Hastings – I think the Steering Committee is doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing and our voice on this thing is well heard and taken into account.

Newstadt – I am well aware that we have input. I want to make it clear that we are not an approving authority, we are a consulting agency that will feed information that we feel is important to the Steering Committee. And members of this Commission that happen to be on the Steering Committee, will voice our feelings and what we would like to see happen with the Home.

Hastings – I think that is a correct statement. As I said at the on start of the meeting, the Steering Group meets at 2:00 PM every Wednesday right here in this room and all of you are invited to sit in on it.

Kitson – Back to Site A, has anyone talked to Milford about the two story gym the Boys and Girls Club is going to be building right in front of it so you can't see the building?

Magner – That is down the road from it really.

Holloway - We are aware of it and we have spoken to the City of Milford several times. We were told the Boys and Girls Club will be right here (refers to drawings).

Kitson – Then it has been moved from where their sign is then, right in the curve (additional discussion referring to the drawings).

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Harden (WAVES Nat'l) - We are working on our Salute to Hospitalized Veterans Day. I have written to the Philadelphia Phillies to get the Philly Fanatic down one day, so hopefully we can get him back again. In working with the American Legion, we will be serving lunch to all the patients in the Nursing Home.

Newstadt (JWV) – We are now gearing up for a poppy sale, which is going on as we speak and hopefully we will net enough to make another significant contribution this year to the Home Fund. On a personal note, I did attend the screening of the Veterans Spoken History and I was impressed. I think that what we saw certainly was a professional quality exert and I look forward to seeing it when it is completed. It is particularly unique, in that, they are also going to include, not just members of the military, but folks who contributed significantly to the war effort in the Wilmington area. There are some pictures included in that and they gave a pretty good library of graphics to go with it, old photographs and so forth.

Webb (VVA) – Just to let Tony Davila know that we will take a head count and give you a check at the luncheon.

Kitson (VFW) – I passed out “Operation Uplink” phone card request forms to all the Commissioners and I have some more here. According to VFW National, all the requests have to come through the “Operation Uplink” Chairman for that department, which I am for the Department of Delaware. I suggest if you want to order cards for anyone who is overseas, fax it to me; you have the fax number on the new printout of the Commission members and it is also on the website. That cuts down about 2 weeks off the approval process. If you send it out to National, they are going to go through the requests once a week and say they are all from Delaware and then send me an e-mail with all of them attached. Then I have to go through and call everybody. Where as, if I get it first, I say OK and fax it to them and it is a done deal. Our Gala is in January and the next big thing we have coming up is our Eastern States Conference on November 19-20, here in Dover.

Thompson (MCL) – Four of our five units are involved, or will be involved shortly, with “Toys for Tots”. I attended a national training course in Alexandria for three days this month. One unit up north with MCR, I think has already started their program. We are starting ours as soon as Election Day is over for Kent County. The two in Sussex County are going to start on or about 2-3 days after Election Day. Most of them will pass out toys on or about the 22nd of December through their various methods. They want to allow at least three days before Christmas, and yet allow as many days as possible to collect the toys.

Lardizzone (DAV) – We are getting ready to gear up for November 15, 2004, DAV has an exclusive with the Golden Corral. Any Golden Corral across the States will have a Military Appreciation Day, which will run from 4-9 PM. Any veteran, active duty member, Reservist, National Guard member, or retiree will get a free meal.

Thompson – Should they bring anything with them to prove they are a veteran?

Lardizzone – No, we take their word on it.

Carroll (MOPH) – The MOPH National Office in Springfield is very small and confined, and there has been a search committee in place for well over a year, looking for a new location. It is very possible that the new office may be located outside of the Springfield area. The National Adjutant position is open, and if anyone would care to know more about that, I can furnish the information; the available salary, and it is fairly sizable. The National editor for the Purple Heart magazine has elected to resign after another couple of months, however, there are a number of applicants in for that job. There is a new program that has been started at the national level, in which junior vice-commanders, down into the chapter levels, are going to be taking a two-day training conference. This is very similar to what the other larger organizations are doing in training their junior officers to bring them up through the ranks and learn the ropes.

Magner (AMVETS) – I attended the District 2 meeting that was held in Millsboro this past Saturday; we had very good attendance and our Commander, Jeannie Shinbur, mentioned that nowhere in the region has there been so much enthusiasm in the formation of the Department of Delaware. They are going to be working now with Maryland on the Eastern Shore to develop that area. I am also accepting members, for those who are not dual carrying members of organizations. My home post, Post 1183, on Friday, October 15th did a gate collection at the Daimler Chrysler assembly plant and this is in conjunction with Kitson's (VFW) phone cards. We are working with VFW Post 475, we collected \$1,248 there, also the UAW retirees kicked in another \$400, and they have considered matching funds of what we collected at the gate. So we are in excess of \$2,000 for the "Project Uplink" and I believe they are going to work that through Post 475 and present it at the Gala dinner. Post 1183 is also conducting a Turkey Drive. I am supposed to pick up 200 turkeys from the Giant Food Store in Bear, Delaware. 100 of those turkeys are going to be delivered to the VA Hospital. Food vouchers will be given to needy families to compliment a turkey dinner. The other 100 are going to be distributed between the mission that deals with homeless veterans in New Jersey, the Sunday Breakfast Mission in Wilmington, the Cecil Men's Shelter, which does have veterans, and a VFW in Millington. For a new department coming on in Delaware, the sky is the limit, we are now making a good representation here in Delaware and we are looking to increase our membership. We have a fine Commander, Michael Brown, and good leadership, and we hope to continue to move ahead.

Ennis (KWV) – Last week, our Korean War vets took our first trip over to the WWII Monument. I was really amazed by what I saw, what a beautiful facility that thing is and the work that has been done to make that happen. I understand from the people that designed it, that the wings that hang when you first go through the entrance were made right here in Newport, Delaware.

Lardizzone (DAV) – When I attended the acting director's meeting and the VAVS, a gentleman from the UAW did a little talk and that pertained to any disabled veteran. Dave Knox is Chairman of the Veterans Committee for the UAW, they have people who are plumbers, electricians, and carpenters, if you know a veteran that needs plumbing or electrical work or a ramp made and all they have to do is pay for the material and they will do the work for you. There is no charge, they are paid by General Motors for the next year to year and a half. All the labor is free and all the veteran would have to do is supply the material. If anyone knows someone, let me know and I will contact Dave Knox, because I am his go-between for disabled veterans. I think any veteran that needs it; they will take care of it.

Dr. Rivera (Director of Public Health) – I just thought I would come by and say "hello" to everyone, introduce myself and let you know who I am. I am sorry I missed the last meeting. With the Veterans Home, our role is to be supportive through our long term care; secondly we provide information on staffing, salary levels, equipment, and anything else that the Commission and their partners want to get the job done. I am happy to answer any questions you may have about what we do in public health and how we relate to the Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

Doran – I am Jim Doran, the National Service Director for AMVETS. My colleague, Master Chief Les Bruce, is our Regional Service Director and he oversees the service officer operations north of Carolina and east of Ohio. We have opened a new department in Delaware and National Commander Boettcher wants a service officer in Dover. They won't give you a budget for a service officer, so Tony Davila and I have been talking about accrediting two of the personnel from the Veterans Commission here as AMVETS representatives, Melanie Bronov and Laurie White. Having them work as our representatives, representing AMVETS, the transition program at DAFB, and handling any of our claims work that comes in with a veteran's request or desire for AMVETS Power of Attorney. I wanted to run that by you folks this morning and get a feel as to your viewpoint. We are already doing it in West Virginia and other states west of the Mississippi River.

Davila – We already have Power of Attorney for The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA), the Marine Corps League (MCL), and the Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH). What we do here in the State is represent their members; in essence their members can come to us for services in order to file a claim for ether compensation or pension. We help the organizations to carry out their missions and we have been doing that for years. We first got involved about 12 years ago

with TREA, when they asked us to help them since they do not have any service officers. Although MOPH has a service officer up in the Wilmington area, we can still take their claims down here.

Newstadt – Tell me what the uses of the Power of Attorney are generally?

Davila – It means we can represent their veterans who are members of their organizations because they do not have a service officer.

Newstadt - So our people can sign as if they were a member?

Davila – Basically, our service officers are AMVETS members already, so in essence, we are just helping that organization as we would do with the MOPH, TREA, and MCL.

Carroll – A POA is a document in which that veteran, having signed off, entitles that advocate/service officer to go into the files of the VA or DOD and retrieve their records.

Davila – The POA you are talking about has to be given to us by the veteran, we can't do that. The POA we are talking about with AMVETS is that we can represent their veterans. Once the veteran gives us their POA, then we can legally represent them and look at their medical records, etc.

Doran – With an AMVETS POA, Tony Davila's two staff members would be able to pull up in the computer database, any veteran serviced by the VA that has AMVETS listed as their POA. It does not have to be a case that Melanie or Laurie has handled personally; it can be any veteran who has selected AMVETS as their representing organization.

Davila – It provides us with a little more power in the sense of being able to serve more veterans in Delaware. That is the key here; how many we can serve by working with the veterans organizations.

Harden – Do you not already have such a load on these two women? If you add additional work, don't you need an additional service officer? How can we put more on these two women?

Davila – Even though we are saying to AMVETS that we will assist them, it doesn't mean that person will assist them. It is just an opportunity if they need to file a claim.

Harden – Once they find out they can come here; they will come.

Davila - They are coming anyway.

Doran – They are coming anyways, but when they sit down with the service officer, one of the first questions the service officer asks is when we submit your claim, do you want a specific veterans organization to represent you, if so, who? If you say VFW and we do not have a VFW POA in the organization, then you may have to forward the paperwork out to the nearest VFW service officer. Where as, if they say an organization that you have a POA with, then you just do the paperwork and send it on.

Harden – They are just so overloaded now with work. I think taking on more is going to be just such a pressure for them.

Davila – It is in my understanding that in the next budget, the Secretary is supporting the request for a third service officer.

Harden – Oh, I hope so.

Smith Windsor – Now you know why I want you all there.

Harden – As a member of AMVETS, I just wanted to ask this question. You may have people belonging to the Dover post coming, but are you going to have the northern section of people coming down?

Davila – Our third service officer will be located up north, that position is for New Castle County.

Carroll – That POA that the veteran signs over to the different service organizations, that carries nationwide. We put on there any national MOPH service officer, so if he moves out of state, he can go to any MOPH service officer in another district, another state, wherever.

Harden – I just didn't want to see those two overloaded anymore.

Davila – We definitely need the help and I am glad the Secretary has supported the effort to secure our third service officer.

Daws (VVA) - As we have found over the months, during the process of the Veterans Home and the site selection, there have been a lot of questions and there have been a lot of misunderstandings. I have had a lot of questions and I have had a lot answered today, and I appreciate everyone who spoke on this issue because it did clear things up for me. I do come to the Commission, I am a veteran of Delaware, and I do have questions. Now, I don't expect the Commission to agree with everything that I say, but I also do not expect the Commission to act with indifference, and I certainly do not expect to be accused of being inappropriate or adversarial, but these things do happen. The only thing I do expect from the Commission is to show a concerned response to the questions we have. We get them sometimes, maybe not within the timeframe or what we want, but that is part of the whole process, because we cannot agree on everything and no one does. We can agree to disagree. Hopefully in going forward with the Veterans Home, things will go a little bit smoother. But you know, you are my representative body, and I will still come here and I will still ask the questions, like it or not, you are stuck with me.

Hastings – A couple of you are up for reappointment. Would anyone care to, in open forum or privately, tell me about the status of your reappointment, see me afterwards. You told me a replacement for Bob Marcinkowski is not in the queue?

Davila – We have not received any word yet.

Hastings – Anything further on Reese Phillips' situation?

Davila – He was in the hospital for a week and now he is back home. We called him yesterday and he said he couldn't make it today because he was homebound.

Hastings – A nursing home in Wilmington up on Faulk Road, Faulk Manor North, has requested a speaker on November 11, Veterans Day, at 1:30 or 2 pm, to speak for about an hour. The new committee assignment sheet has been issued and should be in your packets, along with the new Commission roster and schedule of meetings. Don't forget the Secretary of State's budget hearing on November 19th, Tatnall Building, 9:00 AM, bring all the folks you can get there, and wear your green blazers.

Magner – MOPH Chapter 9377 is selling these clocks as a fundraiser, the proceeds are going to benefit hospitalized veterans. The clocks are \$15 and they are similar to the ones that Terry Spence, Speaker of the House, had and it has the Purple Heart logo.

Hoag – Thursday, November 4, 2004, 10:00 AM, down in the Georgetown Circle, there is a monument being dedicated for the fallen Vietnam Veterans of Sussex County. We already have the monument, it is a ceremony, and it is also Return Day in Georgetown. We would like as many people as possible from the Commission to show up. We have several color guard units that will be there.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: NOVEMBER 23, 2004 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED